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824 538 buried by their mother. Almost immediately the seven sisters ran away, and when the mother could not find them, she went to the place where the placenta was buried and let the milk from her breasts fall upon it. As the days went by there gradually grew up from the placenta a tree which was full of milk. This was the sago-palm that was born from milk and always [524] gives milk. There is a riddle—'Milk comes from the horns of the buffalo'.

Another story comes from Pharasgaon. Long ago there were eleven brothers and one day as they went hunting in the jungle they grew very thirsty. They came to a group of palm trees and rested in their shade. The youngest brother looked up at the tree and said, 'This is a very fine tree. Surely there is water hidden in its branches! I can see a pot tied there. Who can climb up and get it?' Each of the brothers tried to climb the tree and failed, for when they were nearly at the top they saw that the pot was full of blood. But the youngest boy made a rope of siari fibre and climbed up and when he looked in the pot the juice appeared to him as milk. He brought it down and they all drank of it. The ten elder brothers fell senseless but the youngest boy was intoxicated with pleasure. But he grew afraid thinking that his brothers would die. Then his god said to him, 'Offer a pig to the Gorga Kanyang and they will recover'. He sacrificed a pig and his brothers sat up again.

[782] This is the origin of the sacrifices that are made to the tree before it is tapped. It is believed that if no offerings are made the juice turns into blood and makes the people ill. If offerings are withheld for a long time, the tree dries up.

In the Chota Dongar area, the Hill Maria of the Abujhmar and the Muria of their immediate neighbourhood trace the palm to Tallur Muttai or Mother Earth herself. At the beginning of the world, Tallur Muttai came with Kadrengal (whom some call her brother and some her husband) to the forest of Bastar. Kadrengal was innocent of sexual desire, and so Tallur Muttai created sago-palms with the hope that their juice would excite him. When Kadrengal first went to tap the trees, he tied a thread from the cut peduncle down to a hole which he dug below, but the wind blew it to and fro and the juice was scattered. Then Tallur Muttai taught him how to tie a gourd to catch the juice and place a leaf to guide it safely. Kadrengal drank a great quantity; desire came to him; and he went to Tallur Muttai.

But the Hill Maria of Jharagaon and Nalnar say that the palms originated when the seven Kanyang, daughters of Bhagavan, came down to Singardip (the world) to bathe. They combed their hair, and wherever their hairs fell the trees sprang up. They give the names of three of the Maidens of the sago-palm—Fuse Kanyang, Ganganangi Kanyang and Kondakalbuli Kanyang.

●245 The palms are carefully guarded. Sometimes a large bamboo mat is tied round the trunk; sometimes bundles of thorns are placed to deter the thief. The owners sometimes live in little leaf-huts built below the trees in order to guard them. The tree is climbed by a long bamboo pole which hooks on to a branch at the summit. The side-shoots of the pole are not removed and these serve as the steps of the ladder. When not in use it is removed and kept in a house or in some hiding-place in the jungle. Sometimes a large loop is made at the end of the ladder and it fixes on to a bamboo hook which is tied to the tree.

This is the method of extracting the juice. The ends of the flowering spadices are cut and hollow bamboos, gourds or earthen pots are fixed where they can catch the flow of sap. Bamboos or gourds are simply tied to the tree, but a pot may be fixed in position with a couple of poles below it tied round the trunk and fixed together supported by a string tied to a bough above. The pot is placed inside a basket and its mouth tied to the spadix, to the end

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of which a folded leaf of the date palm is attached to ensure that the juice trickles down into the pot. A small gourd with a hole at either end is kept in the pot, which is finally protected with a bamboo cover to guard it from wind and birds. 245

When the climber has reached the pot, he removes the leaf and scrapes the end of the cut spadix with a knife that is kept among the branches. Sometimes he rubs it with a little marking-nut juice. Then he removes the sap from the pot and puts it in a gourd tied round his waist. Sometimes if the tree is very high, he lowers this gourd down to the ground with a cord. Then he replaces the leaf at the end of the spadix, puts the cover over the pot and descends.

There are various rules and customs about the use of the juice. It is not considered good to drink it when it is too sweet, as it has a laxative effect. For this reason a little of the old juice is always left in the pot to ferment it. To increase its power a little of the root of the danbaher tree is added. When the weather is cloudy it is considered that it will not be good. The juice of a newly tapped tree should not be given to a pregnant woman or she may abort. In fact, at the beginning, when a new tree is tapped only men drink. The Hill Maria do not give the juice at any time to a woman in her menstrual period. 273 [843] [841]

There is a curious idea that the sago-palm itself is subject to a menstrual period.[1] Every month there is a space of two or three days during which the juice does not flow properly and it is not considered safe at this time to drink even what little there is. So, too, for the first week or so after a new tree is tapped the juice should be avoided, for it is then, they say, like semen. At Phunder, the Muria said that the end of the tree's menstrual period is indicated by the presence of a lotus leaf in the pot. 824

In some villages, the Muria believe that two Kanyang visit the palms. One is Jal Kanyang, and is a motiari; the other, Kaudo Kanyang, is regarded with characteristic inconsistency as a chelik. When Kaudo Kanyang comes to play in a tree, the juice is scanty but good; when Jal Kanyang comes, the juice flows like a river but it is less potent. Sometimes then a little sand and even fish are found in the pot.

This belief in the fish that get into the pot is widespread. Once in the days of Chaitu Gaita of Alor, a chelik climbed a sago-palm and found two *turu* fish and some sand at the bottom of the gourd. At Palli I was told that such fish were 'sometimes caught by the Salphi Maiden and taken up into the tree'. I have recorded the same idea among the Hill Maria.[2]

When a tree is tapped for the first time offerings are made to the Gorga Kanyang. In some villages a hollow bamboo full of water is brought from a stream and leant against the foot of the palm. It is believed that a Kanyang lives in this water and probably there is an idea that the tree will give as much juice as there is water in the bamboo. In order to improve the flow of juice the villagers sometimes promise the Gorga Kanyang a pig or a chicken. 245

At Adnar on the day they first tapped a new tree the village Gaita, followed by all the villagers, came to its foot. With red and black powder he made a row of three circles, inside each of which he drew a cross. Rice was piled on these crosses and two leaf-cups full of salphi juice were placed by them. One pile of rice was for the Gorga Kanyang, one for Kaudo Kanyang, and one for

[1] This idea is widespread: I have found it among Juang, Kond, Gadaba, Bondo and, in Bastar, among the Bison-horn Maria.

[2] Compare B. L. Hora, 'Rains of Fishes in India', *JRASB.*, Vol. XXIX (1933), pp. 93ff.

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Mother Earth. The Gaita offered eggs and chickens, first making the chickens eat the rice and then killing them. The juice in the leaf-cups was offered to the Earth Mother and the Kanyang and then everyone drank a little. After this the owner was free to tap the tree in the ordinary way.

Failure of the sago-palm may be due either to black magic and witchcraft or to the hostility of one of the Gorga Kanyang. The Kanyang, if she is not happy in a particular village, may twist the branches at the top of the tree and cause them to wither. It is generally believed that the tree gives juice for three years 'just as a girl can enjoy herself for three years protected by Lingo in the ghotul. Then she marries and the juice ceases to flow. The motiari of the palm tree is afraid of marrying too soon. If we touch the tree with a cloth yellowed by haldi it will stop giving juice till the new shoots come, for the shadow of haldi (that is, of marriage) is upon it.'

For gonorrhoea, a very rare disaster among these aboriginals, the sufferer stands below holding a leaf-cup into which a friend pours a little of the juice from the top of the tree. The patient offers a few drops to the Gorga Kanyang and then drinks it without allowing it to touch the ground.

The wood of the palm is not usually used for building in Bastar but the Hill Maria make their *turam* drums out of its hollow dried-up trunk. The Muria also make combs and drum-sticks out of the dry wood. Some of the Muria in the Abujhmar foothills make necklaces of the fibre. The leaves are often used as hair-ornaments or to decorate the village dormitories. Sometimes the flowers are pounded into flour, mixed with water and drunk as a sort of gruel. When it is evident that the tree will give no more juice, it is cut down and the pith is removed. This is pounded into a sort of flour and steamed in the usual way into cakes which are popular eaten with honey or sugar. This practice is common across the whole of the sago-palm country. I have found it among Hill Maria, Bondo, Gadaba, and Juang and it has been recorded for the Kadir and Khasi.[1]

The salphi juice is either brought back to the house and stored there until by fermentation it becomes much more intoxicating than in its fresh condition or it is drunk immediately at the foot of the tree. Little groups of people, generally men, go out to the trees, taking with them roasted crabs or frogs, little bits of chicken, various kinds of chutney, carefully wrapped in leaf-cups. The liquor is drunk from leaves, generally simply folded to make a sort of cup, and it is sometimes poured direct into the mouth. Many delightful hours are thus spent by the villagers out among the woods or on the hills.

When a tree is specially planted by seeds or cuttings it is very carefully tended. A fence of wood is built round it and it is watered regularly. Sometimes a tree is associated with the memory of a particular person. In Kanhargaon, a village in the Chota Dongar area, a Muria planted salphi and mango trees fifty years ago and they still preserve his memory. When the people go in the evening to drink the juice, they offer a few drops in the name of Tallur Muttai and Kadrengal to the sago-palm and a few drops in the name of the dead man who planted the trees to the mango, 'so that as we drink you can drink also'.

Generally speaking the tree belongs to the man in whose field or garden it is growing. Where the trees are out in the jungle, or standing in the common land of the village, disputes sometimes arise. The headman or the more influential priests generally claim these trees as their own, but there is also a

[1] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 171.; P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1914), p. 32. See also Grigson, op. cit., p. 152.

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custom that the man who goes to the trouble of tapping the tree, protecting it with thorns, and making a bamboo ladder, has a right over it, especially when it is growing far away in the forest. The trees are not taxed but the villagers are not allowed to sell the juice. Disputes simply arise over the right to take the liquor for personal use. 245 ● 423

The salphi juice, however, is not generally so intoxicating as to cause quarrels in the same degree as landa rice-beer or mahua spirit. Bedford's *Technical Excise Manual* (par. 263) gives some account of the comparative alcoholic strengths of these drinks. 'The alcoholic strength of toddy varies according to the nature of the palm tapped, the season of the year, the time for which it has been drawn and other circumstances. The average results of a number of tests made with toddy from all parts of the Madras Presidency were: 273

		Percentage by Volume
Coconut ..	.. 85·7° U.P.	8·1
Palmyra ..	.. 90·8° U.P.	5·2
Date ..	.. 91·4° U.P.	4·9
Sago ..	.. 89·6° U.P.	5·9

Toddy exposed for sale in Bengal in 1909 was found generally to range in alcoholic strength from about 93° to 94° U.P. When reasonably fresh it has a food value somewhat comparable with that of well-made malt beer.' The average strength of landa rice-beer may be taken at about 85° U.P. (8·6% by volume). Mahua spirit is much stronger—*rasi* may be sold at strengths of 50° to 70° U.P. and *phuli* of 5° to 35° U.P. The average for *rasi* is 60° U.P. (22·8% by volume) and for *phuli* 25° U.P. (42·8%).

XIII

With all these varied economic and social activities how far do chelik and motiari meet one another during the day? Does tribal custom allow them to share the same tasks or are the functions of men and women sharply differentiated? 462 883

The girls, of course, have the major part of the house-work to see to. They cook, bring water, clean the buildings with cow-dung and whitewash, husk the grain, grind wheat or spices. They generally make the *masni* mats, tie grass into brooms, prepare leaf-plates and cups. In the house a woman must not climb on the roof and she must not take grain out of the dhusir grain-bin, although it may only be removed at her command. A motiari before the menarche may go into the room where the Pot of the Departed is kept, but not afterwards—for she is going to join another clan and has no part with these ancestors; her spirit will mingle with those of her husband's family.

The chelik, on the other hand, have comparatively little to do in the house. They may cook and bring water when the womenfolk are in their periods; they have the business of erecting the framework of the building which the girls will later plaster with mud, and they thatch the roof.

But their main work is outside. In male hands is all the business of the fields and forest. They make and use the ploughs; they cut wood for fuel or cultivation; they embank the fields; they tend the cattle, make and drive their carts; they go to hunt and fish; they watch the crops and thrash and winnow them.

Yet there remain many chances for sharing of labour between chelik and motiari. A boy does not always see his motiari in the dark. Both can repair